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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men

Statement submitted by the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women's Organizations and World Movement of Mothers, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

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Trafficking in and enslavement of women

As organizations that have been involved for many years in the promotion of basic human rights for humankind and especially women and children, we are concerned with the recent increase in the trafficking in and enslavement of women throughout the world and, particularly at this time, the growing number from Eastern Europe. The United Nations estimates that there are 4 million people throughout the world who are victims of trafficking yearly. They are deceived and coerced into working against their will in different types of servitude. The International Organization for Migration reports that about 500,000 victims of trafficking enter Western Europe annually.

Young Asian women have been the basic commodity for decades. The newcomers to the slave market are young, naive Ukrainian, Russian and other Slavic women who, because of their economic hopelessness and lack of employment, are entrapped, enslaved,

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stripped of their basic human rights and forced to work in houses of prostitution in various parts of the world. This trade in human flesh has become so lucrative that international organized crime is taking full advantage of the easy money and the lack of laws and stiff punishment. Many of these women are imprisoned in overcrowded living conditions and are threatened and beaten and not fed if they protest or do not perform sex with the "clients". All traces of these women are lost; they disappear forever. They have no legal status in the countries to which they are forcibly sent and no recourse to law enforcement.

Governments seem to be indifferent to this growing trafficking in women and girls and are not implementing the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. The effective suppression of trafficking in women and girls for the sex trade should be a matter of pressing international concern.

Trafficking in women and girls is a debasement of the human spirit for both the victim and the perpetrators and collectively for the societies involved.

This modern day slavery cannot continue!

We as well as Zonta International, the National Council on Family Relations, the International Union of Family Organizations, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, the Women's International Democratic Federation, the International Health Awareness Network, the International Federation on Ageing, World Information Transfer, the International Alliance of Women, and the Global Alliance for Women's Health, supporting non-governmental organizations, appeal to all Governments to take definitive action to resolve this human tragedy.